

# Soil

Let's study the earth by learning about the part of it that we are most familiar with: the **soil**. Soil is found on the upper-most layer of the earth's crust.

## What is soil?

Soil is a mixture of four main ingredients: weathered rock, organic matter, air and water. The weathered rock can be in the form of sand, silt, clay, pebbles or larger rocks. Organic matter can be anything from old leaves, dead animals and plants, to microorganisms—tiny living things, like bacteria. The last two ingredients are air and water. Without air and water, the microorganisms found in soil cannot live, grow, or help dead matter to decay.

## Why is soil so important?

Soil is important because it provides a place where organisms and bacteria can live. Plants rely on soil for nutrients, water and mineral salts. Plants in turn provide the oxygen we breathe, the food we eat, the clothes we wear, and the foundation and building materials we use to make our homes. We could not meet our basic needs without soil!

**Comprehension:** What is the main idea of these two passages?

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